4 – 6 June, 2015

UniBastions, University of Geneva

THURSDAY, 4 JUNE 2015:

8:30 – 9:30   Registration and Welcome

9:30 – 10:30   **Keynote Speech (B106): Jeffrey Jerome Cohen**
                                    "Posthuman Environs"
                              (Chair: Deborah Madsen, University of Geneva)

What if language, supposedly the most human of tools, sometimes pulses with environmentality, conveying the force of the more-than-human even as we incise our anthropocentric epochs into substances like stone? Offering a counter-narrative to our lonely petric tales, these stories disperse the human without disembodying it, a change of climate for thinking ecology, enmeshment, and environmental justice. We inherit in the strata of our words histories of composition and companionship that exceed us. Sometimes language sounds more than signifies, re-presents rather than signs. This talk explores onomatopoeia as an ecological phenomenon. Literally a "name-making," onomatopoeia is a movement into language of acoustical vibrations from alien realms. The material world has always imprinted itself upon us, with us, despite us. If we tarry for a moment over longer histories we might recognize they already inhabit us, sometimes as narratives, sometimes in strangely communicative sounds that intermix matter and meaning. Onomatopoeia and its allied modes of wordsmithing thrum with an impulse to mimesis, intensification and alliance; creative acts of environmental apprehension; communication with sound more than signification; an impress from a nonhuman elsewhere, posthuman environs.

10:30 – 11:00   Coffee break

11:00 – 12:30   **Panels 1 + 2 + 3**
Panel 1 (B101): The Medieval Posthuman
(Chair: Sarah Brazil, University of Geneva)

Elizabeth Leet, PhD Candidate, University of Virginia and the Université d'Orléans

"Jordanus Rufus and the Emotional Posthumanism of Medieval Equestrians"

Despite the often-discussed role of horses in medieval European society, Jordanus Rufus' popular 13th-century veterinary manual *La marechaucie des chevaux* has not been examined for its striking advocacy of gentle training practices and restrained use of harsh equipment. This paper will dissect Rufus' advocacy of touch-based cues, horse-dependent time, and the minimization of artificial aids (whips, spurs, harsh bits) as evidence of a new medieval posthumanism. The manual's consideration of horses

as fundamentally emotional and sensitive creatures contrasts markedly with previous posthumanist medievalist critics who posit equines primarily as warriors who facilitate the masculine embodiment of knights.

To situate the Rufus manual into the already heavily-studied role of horses in medieval society, I will consider current critical opinions about medieval horse-human relationships that highlight the masculine embodiment central to chivalry. In particular, the studies of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Joyce E. Salisbury, and Susan Crane situate horse-human interactions in the context of chivalric identity, especially considering the role of multiple materials (man-horse-spurs-sword-armor) in a proto-posthuman hybrid identity that either enriches (Crane, 2011) or impugns (Cohen, 2003) the sovereignty of the human participants.

La marechaucie des chevaux, however, demands that horsemen act as stewards of the horse's emotional well-being in order to benefit fully from the service and status he confers. Notably, Rufus carefully monitored equipment which might incite fear, an emotion Rufus believed was incompatible with true obedience. Instead of exerting dominance over a mount through pain and coercion, Rufus advocated gentleness and patience as the best means to develop each horse into a willing, confident partner. This paper will aim to demonstrate how *La marechaucie* complicates theories of the medieval posthuman by shifting focus away from the human and identifying equine emotional sensitivity as the determiner of medieval chivalric relationships.

Alan S. Montroso, PhD Candidate, George Washington University

"Caverns of the Inhuman: Porous Bodies and Posthuman Subjects in Pre-modern Literary Representations of Caves"

When humans enter a cave they are forced to adapt to an ecology alien and unsympathetic. In dank clefts humans encounter nature's multiplicity, face the density of animal life, and must consider the beast within, the possibilities and limitations of humanity's own materiality. With its paradoxically moist mutability and stony recalcitrance, the cave in its sheer strangeness resists humanist conceptualizations and provokes a posthumanist thought project : Inside the cave, where laws built on the sanctity of the human subject and the certainty of species difference fail to obtain, the human is adequately positioned to respond to Cary Wolfe's invitation to take seriously "pluralism's call for attention to embodiment, to the specific materiality and multiplicity of the subject" (*Animal Rites,* 9).

In the heterogeneous discourses that arise within these geological spaces inhospitable to – but not always uninhabited by – humans, I map the boundaries and binaries upon which contemporary anthropocentric paradigms rely. Representations of caves proliferated in premodern literature, affording medieval writers and contemporary readers a wealth of opportunities to illuminate the inhuman congregations, the unpredictable gatherings of organic and inorganic objects engendered by subterranean space. Sites like the bear den in the Icelandic saga of Grettir the Strong where the boundary between human and non-human animal is

blurred, as well as the metamorphosing cave in *The Book of John Mandeville* which evidences the insufficiency of language for representing the indeterminacy of matter make available novel ways for thinking with the inhuman in the present. I will bring together a premodern archive and posthumanist thought to consider the porosity of bodies, the blurring of ontological divisions, and the instructive failure of anthropocentric thinking to thrive in the subterranean clefts of the earth.

Panel 2 (B106): Rewriting the (Post)human Monster
(Chair: Elizabeth Kukorelly, University of Geneva)

Megen de Bruin-Molé, PhD Candidate, Cardiff University

"Cannibalising History and Reanimating the Monster in Contemporary Remix Culture"

This examination of revisionist history and remix culture in present-day popular narrative focuses on the current prevalence of monster mashups: twenty-first-century parodies and pastiches of nineteenth-century Gothic across various media. Examples include the recent novel-as-mashup craze (beginning with *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* in 2009), the Showtime TV series *Penny Dreadful* (2014), and the crypto-zoological portrait art of Travis Louie. Drawing on familiar time periods, places, and people, these narratives enable audiences to see the past as something playful and malleable, and are part of a wider 'neo-historical' reformulation and appropriation of the past in popular culture. In this paper, I explore why these mashups are so prevalent in twenty-first-century culture, and how they reformulate nineteenth-century humanist ideas to fit present-day perspectives on identity, memory, and history. I also suggest how this phenomenon exists at the centre of emerging tensions between posthumanism and humanism, currently theorised by movements like new materialism.

The impulse to move 'beyond' the classical humanism and humanities potentially creates a number of problems. How can we imagine something completely outside the human, when our entire experience is framed in human terms? And how do we safeguard against creating either a dangerously narrow or a uselessly broad definition of the human in our attempts to outline its opposite? Using a past that is technically both unalterable and behind us to move forward is a complicated endeavour, particularly in a time so obsessed with declaring that past dead and buried. Naturally resistant to such binary conceptualisations (human/inhuman, present/past, etc.), monster mashups project present-day multiplicities of identity and history onto the more stable fictions of the past. They create wilfully 'false' ruptures in history and subtly incorporate those ruptures into public memory, allowing readers to actively view and shape present perspectives through the lens of past ones.

Thibaud Danel, PhD Candidate, University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis

"After the Frankenstein 'Monster': The Post-Human Avatars of the Frankenstein Creature in Contemporary Science-Fiction"

Ever since its publication, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) has greatly influenced our vision of the modern world. Hardly had the novel come out that, already, the Frankenstein "monster" was integrated into the political discourse as a rhetorical trope for describing key social issues.[1] As far as contemporary science fiction is concerned, *Frankenstein* became more than a mere "American metaphor", as Elizabeth Young recently put it.[2] In many respects, for some, it turned into a "modern myth" in which the creature epitomizes the post-human.[3]

The purpose of this paper is therefore to study the post-human avatars of the Frankenstein creature in contemporary science fiction. The creature has indeed in common with the "post-human" that it cannot be defined satisfyingly. Leaving aside its traditional depictions as a "monster", it has undergone a radical change as far as its function in the myth is concerned, turning in some cases from the main antagonist to the main protagonist.

In this respect, one can understand why the creator is so often confounded with his creation: because it seems that the myth itself raises the question of how the creature can be said to be at once *encom*passing and *sur*passing the human. In so doing, it creates and delineates boundaries which, depending on what its main function is, are constantly being tampered with. This paper will attempt to demonstrate how the evolution of the creature as a post-human figure in contemporary science fiction, visual and textual, is relevant not only to the study of *Frankenstein* as a myth but also to our understanding of the modern world, especially in the United States.

[1] In the early 1820s, British backbencher George Canning alluded to the creature in the House of Commons when he publicly opposed the liberation of slaves in the West Indies. Later on in the U.S., the figure of the monster was taken up to refer to the Confederate States. In 1866 and 1882, it was also used metaphorically in *Punch* in caricatures to mock the working-class in Birmingham ("The Brummagen Frankenstein") as well as Irish nationalist Charles Parnell ("The Irish Frankenstein").

[2] YOUNG, Elizabeth. *Black Frankenstein*: *The Making of an American Metaphor*. London, New-York: New-York University Press, 2008.

[3] LECERCLE, Jean-Jacques. *Frankenstein : mythe et philosophie*. Paris: PUF, 1988.

Kimberly Frohreich, PhD Candidate, University of Geneva

"Reading and Writing Race and the Vampire"

Writing and reading are often central practices in vampire narratives, in both a literal and a figurative sense. In Bram Stoker's 1897 *Dracula* for instance, the writing and recordings of the human narrators are pitted against the vampire's own attempt at "writing" by altering bodies and bloodlines as a "vector of category transformation" (Haraway, 1997). Human characters are also the readers in the story, reading and interpreting the vampire body, and validating the human's subject position in contrast to the vampire as the object(ified) and dehumanized other. Moreover, critics have noted that the vampire also bears a particular relation to race, and I would argue that some nineteenth- and early twentieth-century vampire narratives incorporated racially stigmatizing discourses in the construction of their monstrous

figures. The practices of writing and reading in these narratives also stage the ways in which race is written and read on the body of the other.

Many contemporary vampire narratives point to this process by rewriting the figure in relation to race, encouraging readings that question the way race is written and read. My paper will examine the notions and functions of writing and reading in Stoker's novel and Tod Browning's 1931 film *Dracula*, along with the REwriting and REreading of the vampire in William Crain's 1972 blaxploitation film, *Blacula*, and Octavia Butler's 2005 novel, *Fledgling*. I argue that these more recent vampire narratives allegorize the process of writing and reading race onto the body of the other by emphasizing how racial signifiers have worked with "monstrous" signifiers and by displacing the meanings associated with them.

Panel 3 (B112): The Posthuman Animal in Theory, Literature, and Performance
(Chair: Nicholas Weeks, University of Geneva)

Luther Cobbey, PhD Candidate, University of Texas at Arlington

"Posthumane Ethics"

Perhaps "we" have never been posthuman. Some of us have become aware of the apparent disgrace of our actions as humans. We have defined humanity by rendering nonhuman animals as faceless, even invisible others, incapable of earning the definite article and capital letter of Levinas's "the Other," or the singularity of one of Derrida's animals. Our corrective (post)humanist response has often been to attempt to see a face in "the animal." In this paper, I investigate whether this deliberate choice to be more humane, compassionate, is successfully leading us to a posthumanist ethics.

I read J. M. Coetzee's use of Kafka's phrase "like a dog" in *Disgrace* diffractively in order to question whether the ethics of Coetzee's central character, David Lurie, remains humanistic because it is still humane. At the end of the book, he uses the gentle, assuring touch he has learned while working in an animal clinic to take a dog who has formed a special bond with him to be euthanized. I argue, with Karen Barad, that any form of touch simultaneously excludes and includes and that we cannot neatly cut our ethics apart from our knowledge and our being/becoming.

Barad's agential realism meshes well with Sara Ahmed's "queer" and Shannon Sullivan's "transactional" phenomenologies. They lead "us" to reach beyond satisfaction with the humane treatment of "them." Tweaking feminist standpoint theory, Sullivan draws on Dewey's pragmatism to emphasize the permeability of boundaries between organisms and their environments – that "we" and "they" are transcorporeal, as Stacy Alaimo puts it. Is Lurie touching the inhuman that Barad says "lives through us" when he carries the dog gently to his death, or is he only making the humane choice? To ethically "know" this inhuman, to become posthuman, maybe we need to become posthumane.

Calvin Keogh, PhD candidate, Central European University

"Two Humans, a Cat, and an Ape: An Inscription of Derrida in the 'Vast Zoopoetics' of Kafka"

Central to debates on human/animal distinctions in posthumanist discourse is 'The Animal That Therefore I Am', an address delivered in 1997 by Jacques Derrida on the basis of a repeated encounter with his cat, whose gaze produces in the embarrassed philosopher a doubled and redoubled sense of shame. Emphasizing that his is a real and not an abstract animal, Derrida cites a number of works of literature to which it does not belong, foremost being the "vast zoopoetics" of Franz Kafka, which "nevertheless solicits attention, endlessly and from a novel perspective". Kafka's short story 'A Report to an Academy' is the record of an address delivered in 1917 by Red Peter, an ape-turned-artiste who had won acclaim on all the great variety stages of the civilized world. Originally destined for Hagenbeck's Zoo, where the proper place for apes was in a cage, he realized that the only means of escape available to him was to stop being an ape and to adopt what is proper to men, namely the use of speech, clothing, and other exclusive behaviors. Following Derrida's lead, this paper inscribes his address within a reading of the address delivered by Red Peter through the mediation of Kafka. Whereas the philosopher's cat remains an enigma, the poet allows the animal to articulate, through the discourse of literature, its strategies of survival and of shaming humans for the violence which is committed by them against other species by way of their systems of knowledge and inevitable techniques of intervention.

Lenore Malen, Independent Artist, The New School University

"Between Human and Animal"

Fine art performance and avant-garde theater are known to engage performers and actors in animal mimesis and body modification that destabilize the notion of the human.

Mimesis itself is a behavior performed by both human and non-human animals that originates in the frontal cortex. It's been the subject of numerous recent neurological studies claiming that mimetic gestures, pantomimes, vocalizations are essential for socialization among humans and non-human animals, as well as between the species, i.e. humans imitate animals, but animals also imitate humans. The known shared theatricality between humans and animals was for millennia a key ingredient in shamanistic rituals, further evidence that the ontological separation of human and non-human animals was made more extreme in the modern era.

In performance artists and actors use vocal utterances that ranges from imitative and glossalaic; they also speak a literary and symbolic language (where the animal represented may refer to the alter ego of the human.) Think of Kafka's "A Report to the Academy" and the Irish Playwright Colin Teeven's 2011 adaptation "Kalka's Monkey:" a captured ape, who through training has reached "the cultural level of the average European" reflects on the mutual incompatibility of being human

and being free. Human is the category that Kafka and Teevan are also trying to dismantle.

Through a discussion of contemporary performance and avant-garde theater I will show how performance has become a tool for defining the post human through an exploration of the body's materiality, an imitation of animal behavior and vocalizations, and by comparing performative human and animal acts to representations in symbolic language.

I will discuss performances with living animals and mimetic performances through the work of Julia Oldham, Big Dance Theater Company (Ich, Kürbisgeist) the experimental workshops 3LD, and other new American and European groups.

12:30 – 14:00   Lunch

14:00 – 15:30   **Panel of papers 4 + 5 + 6**

Panel 4 (B101): The Limits of the Body
(Chair: Christina Ljungberg, University of Zurich)

Erin E. Edwards, Assistant Professor of English, Miami University

"Fissures, Sutures, Grooves"

In a 1919 essay entitled "Primal Sound," Rainer Maria Rilke fantastically imagines using the phonograph stylus to "play" the coronal suture of the skull, thereby liberating a heretofore unknown range of "sounds, music, [and] feelings." "Primal Sound" describes a posthuman positionality whereby one might use the prosthetic extension of new media to engage in a radical auto-examination—an "auto-autopsy" that bypasses the evaluative apparatus of the Enlightenment subject and directly accesses the previously buried acoustic "life" of the human. While Rilke regards his fantastic experiment as an occult preoccupation, my paper traces similar associations between the coronal suture and new media across a range of early twentieth-century forms. Mina Loy's essay, "Incident," imagines reopening the coronal suture of the skull, admitting an electrified, "reanimated" bodily form; Man Ray's experimental "rayographs" use the collaged suture of everyday objects to depict etherealized images of the skull; and the stitched seams and scars of the creature in James Whales's *Frankenstein* exteriorize and redraw the cranial suture, even as they invoke the formal cuts and sutures that constitute film itself. In each of these texts, fissures, sutures, and grooves define new interfaces between the subject and new media, as the skull is reimagined as a surface richly encoded with information or as a "hauntologically" uncertain material whose form is continually reinscribed. Previously signifying the mortal limits of the human, the skull thus becomes a literally *post*human site from which to interrogate the human's relationships to both technical media and materiality in general: Rilke concludes his thought experiment by imagining that the stylus could by lifted from the coronal groove and placed upon any

natural line or contour, thus playing and animating what has previously been a kind of silent and dead world.

This paper is drawn from a chapter in my book manuscript, "Corpse and Character: After the Human."

Roxane Hughes, PhD Candidate, University of Lausanne

"Medical Preservation and Art: The Mummified Bound Foot of the Mütter Museum"

Mummification is a process that was adopted in ancient times in an attempt at "preserving" the dead, embalming their bodies in chemicals before burial. Blurring the line between embodiment characterizing life and disembodiment following death, the mummy is a creature existing in a state beyond the human. Commonly acting as a distant past and culture in the space of the museum nowadays, and embodying our anxiety of the living dead in popular media, the mummy is posthuman indeed. However, how is the mummification process redefined in the context of medical studies when malformed or voluntarily deformed body parts have been preserved for scientific reasons? When do these scientific specimens become art?

In 1874, Dr. Kerr of the Medical Missionary Society's hospital in Guangzhou received a patient whose bound feet had mortified from cold and dropped off. He sent her amputated and mummified feet as medical studies to England and the United States.[1] One of them is now part of the permanent collection of the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians in Philadelphia. Scientists originally displayed the flesh and bones of the deformed foot to shed light onto the physical reality of footbinding, and thus exposed the *inhumanity* of the Chinese Other. Yet, by turning the mummified foot into a museum artifact, scientists also blurred the line between the anomalous and the artistic wonder, and drew attention to our own human taste for the morbid unsightly. By looking at the contemporary display of this bound foot specimen in the Mütter Museum's temporary exhibition "Grimm's Anatomy: Magic and Medicine," this paper explores the imbricated scientific and artistic networks in which this preserved foot has been inserted; a network that deconstructs the binary oppositions of life and death, embodiment and disembodiment, as well as fiction and reality.

[1] See Beverly Jackson, *Splendid Slippers: A Thousand Years of an Erotic Tradition.* Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1997. 134, 136. For the original story, see Alicia Archibald Little, *In the Land of the Blue Gown* (1908).

Karolina Kazimierczak, Lecturer, University of Aberdeen

"On Being/Becoming in Cancer Services: Posthumanist Identities in Prostate Cancer Care"

This paper is concerned with various practices and relations in the clinic, with the ways in which they help to enact and materialise specific objects/bodies and their attributes/identities, and with the consequences of these materialisations for different notions of subjectivity.

Drawing on posthumanist, performative, material-semiotic approaches (Barad 2007, Haraway 1997, Law 2002, Mol 2002), I explore the mutual being/becoming of cancer and cancer care, and of cancer patients and specialists. Following Barad, I do not treat these identities as pre-existing properties of discrete (human or nonhuman) subjects or objects; nor as relations between already established entities which are understood as preceding their relating; but rather as the effects of particular, local exclusions (in which humans and nonhumans are differentially enacted); in other words, as something which is "at stake and at issue in what matters and what doesn't matter" (2012: 50).

What constitutes prostate cancer? How is it determined and classified? How are these classifications implicated in shaping and reshaping of clinical relations: between patients and professionals, between diseases and the bodies they affect, and between diseases and the means for their management? What specific practices and apparatuses are involved in the materialisation of the differences and boundaries within these relations? And what are the consequences of these inclusions/exclusions? What "marks are left on bodies" (Barad 2003: 828) as their result?

These are the issues that I grapple with in this paper, as I seek to move away from the humanist, modernist concepts of subjectivity towards those of posthumanist identities.

Panel 5 (B106): The Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern Arts
(Chair: Aleida Auld-Demartin, University of Geneva)

Kate Maxwell, Associate Professor, University of Tromsø

"The Posthuman (Music) Manuscript"

The parchment of the medieval manuscript page is a site of multimodal play. The smell of dried skin, the feel of flesh side and hair side, the sound of the performance(s) it witnesses, the visual layout, even the taste of the medieval metaphor of consuming the text – an encounter with a medieval manuscript is a multisensory experience which engages the human body: the word is made (on) flesh.

These documents were (are) mutable, subject to alteration, to annotation. Rubbed-out faces of demons, over-kissed images of saints, admonitions of a 'fuckin abbot' (Wiles, 2014): manuscripts bear witness on their bodies (made from bodies) to use, reading, devotion.

In the apparent return to the sources due to digitisation, relatively little research has been done on how we interact with digitised medieval manuscripts, and how the bodily interaction changes. Fragments are viewable in their entirety, yet whole books are fragmented to fit the technological space. The act of turning the page has mutated into scrolling, clicking, or touching a screen. The hardware and software have become mediators in and of themselves. Most of all, the flesh-on-flesh interaction of human to animal body meets an electronic barrier.

With manuscripts containing music, the picture changes again. Given the complex relationship between the medieval manuscript and the body, and between medieval music and the manuscript page (Maxwell and Simpson, 2014), the time is ripe to combine these two approaches and to consider the posthuman music manuscript.

References:
- Kate Maxwell and James Simpson, 2014. 'Page, Performance and Play: Presence and Absence in Medieval Lyric Transmission and Reinterpretation'. *Proceedings of the XVIth Nordic Musicological Congress, Stockholm, 2012* ed. Jacob Derkert and Peder Kaj Pedersen
- Kate Wiles, 2014. 'On the Origins of Fuck, Part 2: But What About the D?', http://solongasitswords.wordpress.com/2014/09/01/on-the-origins-of-fuck-part-2-but-what-about-the-d/ accessed 1st September 2014

Karen Raber, Professor, University of Mississippi

"Visualizing the Renaissance (Post)Human"

The vegetal, floral, and other composite faces created by sixteenth-century artist Guiseppe Arcimboldo are now the most familiar examples of a whole range of experiments in early modern art that represented bodies, as well as faces, using non-human materials. Giovanni Bracelli's 1624 *Bizarrie di Varie Figure*, for instance, constructs human forms out of assemblages of tools, metal pieces, feathers, architectural components, or sometimes just puffs of cloud or unspooling filligree. Nicolas de Larmessin's 1680 *Les Costumes Grotesques*, although more representational than some of Bracelli's work, depicted bodies clothed in the instruments of a profession—a weapons-maker, for instance, decked out entirely in swords and daggers, or a fruit-seller whose dress is made of fruits [see figures 1 through 3 below]. Arcimboldo's images have recently featured in ecocritical readings of early modern texts and culture; increasing interest among early modern scholars in ecostudies or in the new materialisms of Actor Network Theory or Object-Oriented Ontology has renewed the currency of his provocative images and their close cousins, Bracelli's *Figure*. However, few sustained scholarly arguments about what is at stake in such experimental early modern representations have yet emerged. In this paper, I discuss the genre's figures, Bracelli's in particular, as examples of pareidolia (the tendency to see faces and human forms in assemblages of non-human matter) and apophenia (the assignment of patterns to random data); specifically, I focus on the many ways they disturb and complicate the regime of the visual in depicting the human body. To make its case, the paper travels from Da Vinci's endorsement of pareidolia, through the details of Bracelli's figures, to Emmanuel Levinas's use of the face-to-face encounter, and William Gibson's take on history in *Pattern Recognition*, speaking along the way with theorists like Katherine Hayles, Cary Wolfe, and Neil Badmington among others, to arrive at an understanding of how, through their experiments with visual reception and interpretation, these early modern artists establish a profoundly *posthuman* pre-modern visual rendering that challenges not only the status of the human (of whatever period), but perhaps also the nature of our own postmodern and posthumanist desires regarding history.

Anya Heise-von der Lippe, Assistant Lecturer and PhD Candidate, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen / Freie Universität Berlin

"Frankenpeople" – (Post)human(ist) Textuality in Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* Trilogy

In 2002, Australian artist Patricia Piccinini created a sculpture that shows a mother and her offspring. Its title, *The Young Family*, evokes an anthropocentric view on family bonds, which clashes with the animalistic features of the piece. The creatures depicted are human-animal hybrids, combining human-like skin and eyes with animal-like posture and facial features reminiscent of pigs and dogs. By invoking both the bond of motherly caring and the fragile, ambiguous position of animals in contemporary anthropocentric cultures, *The Young Family* dwells on the boundary between 'us' and 'them', drawing attention to the artificiality and permeability of such boundaries in the age of genetic manipulation and human animal hybrids. Almost simultaneously to Piccinini's posthuman work of art, Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy (2003-2013) voices similar concerns by means of literary narrative. The novels not only introduce two controversial posthuman species – the intelligent, pig-like "Pigoons" and the docile, human-shaped "Crakers" – their complicated, narrative structure also guides the focus toward the cultural contexts of these scientific creations. The textual emphasis on discourses of transgression and liminality underlines the novels' dystopian criticism of both the loss of humanist values in contemporary culture and the selling out of the humanities to an open-market capitalism that is fuelled by humanity's fear of ageing and death. By shifting the focus from the anthropocentric to the non- and posthuman in the second and third novel, Atwood draws attention to possible routes of addressing these issues critically. My paper will focus on aspects of (post)human language, imagery and narrative structure in the *Maddaddam* trilogy and how they reflect (post)human(ist) discourses in contemporary culture. By discussing Atwood's novels alongside Piccinini's art and recent theoretical approaches to the posthuman, it will examine the narratives as a contribution to the ongoing debate about the human and its posthuman other(s).

Mica Hilson, Assistant Professor, Francis Marion University

"Mum and Dad Can Be Posthuman Too: *Remembering Babylon*, Social Dawkinsism, and the Politics of the Family Tree"

Our canonical examples of the posthuman often imagine its emergence within a futuristic world full of "avatars and clones and cyborgs"—an approach that risks

conflating posthumanism with technofetishism, neoliberalism, and/or radical chic. In this paper, I want to explore the posthumanist discourses in a comparatively stodgier text, David Malouf's historical novel *Remembering Babylon*, which tells the story of a settler family in 19th-century Australia. I argue that Malouf rehashes this familiar genre of family story in order to advance a form of posthumanist family values that would challenge the xenophobia and anthropocentrism of contemporary "family values" politics.

The McIvors, the family at the heart of *Remembering Babylon*, initially subscribe to a humanist ethics that defines itself in opposition to the inhuman and the subhuman. Malouf depicts their transformation as they literally and figuratively adopt the inhuman and subhuman into the family, a process that begins when they provide shelter for Gemmy, a half-feral castaway who has lived among the Aborigines. Rather than completely abandoning sentimental conceptions of family bonding and the family tree, Malouf shows how they can be made flexible enough to include a wide array of attachments that cross arbitrary lines of race and species.

In conclusion, I want to consider how the posthumanist family values of *Remembering Babylon* can help us challenge the rise of a neoliberal discourse that I term "Social Dawkinsism"—the notion that it is only natural to place one's own closest biological kin above all others, thus insuring that one's family tree will grow and thrive through a process of genetic inheritance. The posthumanist family values imagined by Malouf are not property values; instead of the modern conceptions of ownership and investment that Social Dawkinsism attempts to naturalize, Malouf celebrates more "primitive" economies of exchange and flow.

Bryn Skibo-Birney, PhD Candidate, University of Geneva

"Hybrids, Companions, and Siblings: The Posthuman Family of *Oryx and Crake*"

Recent research has shown that children who have suffered traumatic experiences, such as divorce, illness, or grief – are more likely to confide in their companion animals than in their siblings. Moreover, though these children may suffer later from poor academic performance and mental-health disorders in comparison to non-traumatized children, the study demonstrates that "children with stronger relationships with their pets had a higher level of prosocial behavior–such as helping, sharing, and co-operating–than their peers."[1] While the research has been deemed "new" in terms of its empirical approach to studying human-animal relationships, the argument itself should not be particularly surprising to many lay "dog-people": popular culture makes common currency of the tightly knit and secretive relationship between the child and the "pet."

Donna Haraway has observed, however, that as domestic-animal terminology has shifted over the past several decades – from "pet" to "companion animal"– so too have the dynamics of the human-animal relationship; specifically, she argues that "[n]ew names mark changes in power, symbolically and materially *remaking kin and*

kind" (emphasis added; *When Species Meet* 135). This presentation works through the potential of this "remaking of kin and kind," using Margaret Atwood's novel, *Oryx and Crake*, to consider the possibility and nature of a "posthuman(ist) family." The protagonist, Jimmy, is caught in tension between the traumatic dissolution of his humanist, nuclear family structure and the emotionally-altering relationships he has with different domestic animals. Like the real-life subjects of the above-cited research, Jimmy not only confides in his companions, but importantly, they are *companion species* (per Haraway): partners in an affective, formative and responsive relationship.[2] In the formative vacuum left by the personal isolation and emotional estrangement that Jimmy feels towards his parents, these animals – the pigoons, Killer (a rakunk), and Alex (a parrot) – decenter the humans of Jimmy's problematic human(ist) family and offer instead a "posthuman(ist) family." In doing so, they demonstrate the potential in the transformation of terminology, from "pet," to "companion," and to "family."

[1] University of Cambridge. "Child's Best Friend?" 7 May 2015.
http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/childs-best-friend
[2] See *A Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) and *When Species Meet* (2008).

15:30 – 16:00   Coffee break

16:00 – 17:30   **Panel of papers 7 + 8 + 9**

Panel 7 (B101): Interspecies Ethics and Violence
(Chair: Bryn Skibo-Birney, University of Geneva)

Florence Chiew, Lecturer, Macquarie University

"Uexküll, *Umwelt* and the Problem of Anthropomorphism"

Famous for his writings on animal perception and the concept of *umwelt*, or 'environment', 19th century Baltic German biologist Jakob von Uexküll argues that there is no purely objective world other than the one that each living organism subjectively experiences. Perception is never a direct apprehension of things-in-themselves, but always already the perception of a subject immersed in a species-specific world. This paper explores Uexküll's claim that *umwelt* is the unique sensorium that envelops each individual like a 'soap bubble'. In particular, I trace a curious tension in Uexküll's explanations of *umwelt* as simultaneously holistic yet perspectival (i.e. generates only partial, subjective viewpoints). On the one hand, *umwelt* is widely celebrated as a holistic vision of the ecological relations between organism and environment as a single, integrated system. On the other hand, Uexküll's insistence on the perspectival nature of perception suggests that each organism is trapped inside the world it constructs for itself, one which could never be accessed in an unmediated way by another being. This tension in Uexküll's work, I argue, is noteworthy as it opens up a productive space to reconsider current

posthumanist accounts of human-nonhuman ethics. At stake in these accounts, as in Uexküll's, is the belief that human experience does not occupy a privileged position from which to understand the object or animal world. However, if the perceptions of nonhuman others are radically alien to human conventions of thinking and speaking, how could we even conceptualise the subject of the nonhuman?

Jacqueline Dalziell, PhD Candidate, University of New South Wales

"Animal 'Nature': Reconsidering Cruelty"

The documentation of 'cruel' behaviour in animals has largely been narrated with three approaches: animals are simply innocent, amoral, or savage. That is, without intellect, without ethical awareness, or solely biologically driven (in the most impoverished sense of the term), the complex workings compelling animal violence remain unquestioned. Instead, motivations for violence in animals are elided in place of the implied explanation, the metronomic impasse: it is their 'nature.' Animal Studies scholars are routinely indebted to, and rely upon, evidence for animal intelligence, intricate sociality, psychical richness, and cognitive acuity in their theorisations, often habitually rehearsing the very humanism inhering within such claims. These claims, however, appear strangely complicit with a less comfortable corollary. Sentience, that which enables animals to feel pain, or cognise, and importantly for these arguments, possess ethical worth, is the very prerequisite that enables them to hurt, intend harm, kill, and torture. Curiously, this conceptual inevitability is assiduously absent from analyses of animal consciousness, as well as its function as a provocation of moral considerability. Attempting to confound, rather than abjure, the given rationalisation for animal 'cruelty' ('nature'), this paper seeks to explore questions of 'unethical' animal behaviour and its theoretical repercussions for Posthumanist inquiry. Arguing that the Cartesian sleight of hand which renders the prospect of intentional, premeditated violence whose perpetrator is not human an impossibility, is as dense a political gesture as the denial of 'moral' behaviour to animals, this paper will complicate the adjudication that it is humans alone who abuse.

Seán McCorry, PhD Candidate, University of Sheffield

"Taxonomic Violence, Finite Bodies: The Species Problem and the Ethics of Killing in Conservationist Biopolitics"

Recent work in the emerging field of Extinction Studies has insisted on the intractable ethical complexities inherent in the operation of conservation programs meant to arrest or avert anthropogenic extinction. The death of 'sacrificial populations' has been described as a form of 'violent-care' by Thom van Dooren, and the violence of conservation has been defended by Donna Haraway as a practice of 'staying with the trouble' which would maintain a fidelity to the complex and conflicting entanglements of human-animal relationships. More sharply, Matthew Chrulew has

claimed that conservation programs (and zoos in particular) constitute biopolitical 'spaces of exception.' This paper will read the biopolitical imperatives of conservation against a critical examination of the concept of 'species'. The 'species problem' in evolutionary biology complicates the legitimacy of taxonomic distinctions between protected and sacrificial populations, and militates against investing the taxonomist with sovereign power over life and death.

As an alternative to the sacrificial imperatives of conservationist biopolitics on the one hand and the subject-centred ethics of orthodox animal rights discourse on the other, I propose an ethics of embodied finitude as a properly posthuman response to the problem of killing in conservationism. Drawing on work by Anat Pick and Ralph Acampora, I argue for the shared experience of embodiment as the point of departure for a multi-species ethics. Such an approach allows us to respond to the ethical claims made by individual animal bodies while avoiding a problematic 'metaphysics of subjectivity' which demands the identification of individual nonhumans with the anthroponormative (and thus, biopolitical) paradigm of 'the subject' as a condition of ethical recognition.

Panel 8 (B106): The Posthuman Dead
(Chair: Kimberly Frohreich, University of Geneva)

Richard Hardack, Independent Scholar (PhD and JD from University of Berkeley)

"The Posthumous and the Posthuman: Living With The Dead Who Do Not Know They Are Dead"

The world came to an end in 1914. Like the mindless dead, who don't know they're dead, we are as little aware as they of having been in Hell ever since that terrible August.
    Thomas Pynchon, Against the Day
My talk focuses on contemporary cultures' obsession with the posthumous as an emblematic form of the posthuman—with the dead who do not know they are dead. I don't address zombies or characters who speak to us from the grave (Alan Ball's specialty in American Beauty and Six Feet Under), but, more narrowly, characters who fail to realize they have died (hwom I refer to as the "nescient dead"). Their situation, I argue, represents a particular aspect of the posthuman condition, in which paranoia about one's human, political and social status is not only validated, but the necessary premise of identity.

I begin with a discussion of Philip K. Dick's Ubik, a central text of the literary genre, in which the protagonist is unaware he is literally in cold storage, and that his "communications" reflect distorted temporal and spatial interactions with the living. (These characters may technically suffer from "Cotard's syndrome," a clinical condition in which one believes that one has died. Emblematically, the protagonist of the film Synecdoche NY, who likely doesn't perceive he's dead, but has a paranoid fear he's dying, is named Caden Cotard).

I then briefly address authors such as Charles Johnson, Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo, many of whose male characters imagine they are already dead. I situate such texts against dozens of recent films that dramatize similar premises, including Adriane Lyne's Jacob's Ladder; The Sixth Sense; A Pure Formality; The Others; Passengers; and Vanilla Sky (the remake of Abre Los Ojos). In all these instances, a character must acknowledge that he (or less frequently she) has been killed, and, in some cases, that those he interacts with are actually the living. In this typically male anxiety, death is the nightmare from which men cannot awake. Such scenarios often reflect characters' fear that their memories are constructs or uncannily repressed, or that their identities are fabricated—that they continue to exist, but in some posthuman state. In some of these films, the "community" of the dead, even if generated by shared "pre-cognitive" drives, offers a striking contrast to the sense of solipsistic isolation many of the putatively living feel. Sara Lauro and Karen Embry, in a Zombie Manifesto, contend that the zombie is a consciousless being that is the only imaginable specter that could be truly posthuman. In Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie As Post-Human, Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro argue that the "post" always still depends on its antecedent, and that the posthuman zombie is both dead and alive, a post that still retains its past. I would add, in the context of both these configurations, that the posthuman figure who exists "post" or beyond the zombie is the dead person who doesn't realize his condition, who thinks he is alive while being dead.

In political terms, I address these posthuman images in the context of postmodern notions of inversion or false boundary (e.g., as developed in Baudrillard and Žižek). Žižek claims that the return of the living dead is emblematic of our time, but how does such reanimation differ from established gothic tropes? If, as George Steiner noted, the twentieth-century is the first time hell has been represented *above* ground, it may also be the first time the dead fail to perceive their status in the contexts I explore, which are informed by postcolonialism; a pervasive sense not only of alienation from one's society, but any definition of self-contained identity; and a feeling that some key millennial event has already past, but has left us unable to assimilate the fact. Just as American prisons may serve to offer the illusion to those outside that they are free, these "inverted revenants" may offer the illusion to the living that they occupy a privileged social space. If, as Orlando Patterson argued, slavery represented a form of social death, the posthuman condition both represents and critiques a form of death in life.

Žižek frequently compares the Freudian father who does not realize he is already dead (i.e., neutralized) and others in that position to cartoon characters who keep running off a cliff until they look down, though he also often invokes the "living dead" of global capitalism.

The economist Jacques Attali's recent similar description of the current state of France might be applied more broadly to our current environmental and economic crises: "We are like in a cartoon, where people see someone still running, not knowing that he has passed a cliff." The posthuman dead then represent a millennial and apocalyptic image of belatedness, of a post- everything existence. According to

Žižek, "For a human being to be 'dead while alive' is to be colonized by the 'dead' symbolic order," to embody the remainder of Life substance that has escaped the symbolic order." (Žižek depicts the dead living as versions of the Lacanian lamella, but also of objet petit a). As Fanon might suggest, these posthumous posthumans stand for what is unrepresentable, unattainable or outside; they conjure not a split between life and death, but between life and itself, and connote a form of post-political and post-social existence in which violence takes the place of representation itself. The question then becomes, what changes politically when these nescient dead living precisely become aware of their condition? What kind of political awakening would occur, and would it represent a return of the repressed, or some kind of transformation beyond the posthuman condition?

Jessica Hurley, Post-doctoral researcher, University of Pennsylvania

"Is the Post- in Posthuman the Post- in Postracial? Zombies and the Remnants of Race in Posthuman Times"

Like the perspective shift of the world seen from space, in which national borders become irrelevant, the temporal zooming-out of posthumanism allows for a fantasy of a singular humanity that might, in an indivisible unity, be transcended, encompassed, or surpassed. The idea of the posthuman is, in this way, imbricated in the contemporary ideology of the postracial: a fantasy of moving beyond racial divisions that are all too human. This paper takes up one of the most ubiquitous contemporary figures of the posthuman, the zombie, in order to interrogate the desire in much posthumanist thought to consign the problems of race to the humanist past.

The first part of the paper draws on recent methodological shifts towards surface reading, itself influenced by the posthuman turn, to read the visual tensions between whiteness and blackness in Hollywood representations of the zombie from 1932 to the present day. While the zombie is supposedly redefined as white, ignoring its Haitian origins, an analysis of the creature's skin shows that this is a whiteness that is constantly dissolving, rupturing, or peeling into the blackness that exists alongside it. I then turn to Colson Whitehead's 2010 novel *Zone One*, arguing that in this novel the zombie figures the return of a repressed history of racial trauma. By aligning the zombie with blackness at the same time as he undermines the division between past and present, human and posthuman, upon which the logic of the zombie depends, Whitehead insists on the continuing importance of race in posthuman spaces. The contemporary fantasy of the postracial produces this specific nightmare as its material unconscious: the walking dead, embodying in their disintegrating bodies the ongoing violence of modern racialization and its disavowal, impossible to contain within the past, the post-.

Panel 9 (B112): The Posthuman Mind and Body
(Chair: Manuela Rossini, University of Basel)

Prof. Brian Bloomfield and Dr. Karen Dale, Department of Organisation, Work and Technology, Lancaster University, UK

We Have Never Been 'Human':* Imaginaries of Cognitive Enhancement and 'Posthuman' Embodiment

The notion that humans have always been a product of their *technics* (Stiegler, 1998), that technological prostheses are supplements that constitute us as human, renders problematic any hard and fast distinction between the 'human' and the 'posthuman' (Braidotti, 2013; Wolfe, 2010). The two terms are mutually constitutive, one cannot be extracted from the other without residue. Yet a movement toward the 'posthuman' is a presumption that inflects much of the current interest in human enhancement technologies, implying a transcendence of our corporeal selves. With a specific focus on pharmaceutical technologies of cognitive enhancement – so-called 'smart drugs' - this paper seeks to contribute to the human-posthuman debate by exploring various overlapping and contradictory social imaginaries of technologically enhanced embodiment that are discernible in a range of cultural sources (scientific, professional, corporate, policy, and media). Such imaginaries are not passively derived from dominant images in society, nor are they abstracted fantasies of how society might be different: they stand in the interstices between those images and those future states.

Cognitive enhancement, through its possibilities for changing the capabilities of the brain, potentially challenges deep-seated ideas of what it means to be 'human'. For example, popular cultural representations, such as the films *Limitless* (2011) and *Lucy* (2014), express both desires and anxieties of going beyond the human through pharmaceutical agents. Thus although the strapline (albeit unscientific) for *Lucy* states that "the average person uses 10% of their brain capacity. Imagine what she could do with 100%", as the central character gains enhancement she begins to lose her 'humanity'. Fear about the loss of the human is mixed with the fantasy of possible posthuman metamorphosis, thereby reiterating a well-worn trope of the relationship between humans and technology.

And yet, cognitive enhancement is not a science-fiction fantasy: the practice (if not yet the fulfilment of the desire) is with us now in the form of off-label use of drugs like modafinil/Provigil by students, the military, athletes and other various professionals, seeking 'an edge'. It has also been subject to policy consideration (e.g. Academy of Medical Sciences, UK 2012).

By reference to imaginaries of the enhanced 'human' body we explore the question of 'posthuman' embodiment in connection with themes of speculation and spectral prosthesis and metamorphosis; boundaries and plasticity.

*With all due acknowledgement to Bruno Latour, Nicholas Gane and Donna Haraway

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Sämi Ludwig, Professor, UHA Mulhouse

"We Have Always Been Posthuman: On the Prosthetic Devices of the Mind"

The claim of posthumanism rings of radicalism and an existential watershed change. It is both a warning that the Humanism we know is disappearing and at the same time a criticism that this very Humanism is lacking, i.e., is not good enough, being ethnocentrically European. I understand both, the criticism of the often limited applications of Humanism, particularly in a colonial context, as well as the fear of new cultural and mechanical technologies and how they redefine us as new creatures. My worry is, however, that the child will be thrown out with the bathwater and that the loss (the very gesture of "post-") will be just that—the loss of a potentially useful and inclusive concept merely because of certain historical abuses and a fear of change that has to do with a fairly limited understanding of what is "human" based on fashionable binary thinking.

Citing the work of psychologists such as William James, Jean Piaget, and Jerome Bruner, I will argue that much of the sense of artificial, outside instrumentality that defines the posthuman argument is actually of human nature in its very origin and design. Rather than defining the human in a negative caricature, I will hence plead for a psychologizing of the concept beyond the limitations of ethnocentric historical definitions, and in particular beyond the proto-modernist mechanics of formalist notions of discourse and understanding—a paradigmatic reorientation that will make us revisit pragmatist philosophy and the narrative imagination of classical American literary realism.

Christina Ljungberg, Associate Professor, University of Zurich

"The Body on Edge – Technology, Environment and Post-human Nature"

Recent developments in technology and science such as artificial intelligence, VR, robotics, nano and biotechnology have made the question of what, exactly, constitutes human nature more urgent than ever. In particular, the question of human enhancement and the normativity of human nature has come into sharp focus. Whereas transhumanists consider human enhancement almost a moral duty, their opponents argue that transhumanist views on what is human are just as normative as the ones they so persuasively attack. Posthumanists, for their part, investigate the physical, mental, sensorial, and cognitive changes human nature is undergoing and discuss how the human body in its interaction with the new techno-social and biocybernetic environment involves the human body as an evolutionary concept. Viewed in this way, the human body can be considered either an evolutionary architecture or a component of an extended operational system, as has been argued by the performance artist Stelarc. Stelarc explores this topic both physiologically and

technically. He considers the body as concept and aims at rethinking it. Body boundaries have been explored by artists since time immemorial, but few have gone as far as Stelarc to permeate and even erase these boundaries in order to scrutinize and redesign the human body by opening it up to the outside environment and to external agents, while keeping it in constant oscillation. How is the human body positioned in such states? Can it be localized and mapped? What are the semiotic implications of the post-human body and to which extent will these developments keep the body on edge? And finally, what do they tell us about our post-human nature?

17:30   Apéritif

FRIDAY, 5 JUNE 2015

9:30 – 10:30   **Keynote Speech (B106): Stefan Herbrechter**
                              "Posthumanist Literature?"
                     (Chair: Manuela Rossini, University of Basel)

Posthumanist – literature – question mark. The question mark gestures towards the conundrum that something like posthumanist literature threatens to be a contradiction in terms. In a move that looks both backwards and forwards, I will speak about my take on posthumanism, the posthuman, posthumanisation, on the one hand, and literature, the literary and post-literary, or the surviving of literature, on the other hand. I will do so by differentiating between a literature of the posthuman and posthumanist literature. Referring to a contemporary literary example I will argue that approaching posthumanism (as a discourse) through the posthuman (figure) puts the future of imagination and the imagination of the future on the line.

10:30 – 11:00   Coffee break

11:00 – 12:30   **Panel of papers 10 + 11 + 12**

Panel 10 (B101): Clones in Literature
(Chair: Deborah Madsen, University of Geneva)

Carole Guesse, PhD Candidate, Université de Liège
"Towards an Understanding of the Literary Posthuman: The Figure of the Clone in
Contemporary Fiction"
Compared to other figures of the posthuman, one of the most distinctive features of the clone is that it seems close to becoming a reality. This may be one of the reasons why clones came to be the focus of some recent, controversial novels such as Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Michel Houellebecq's *La Possibilité d'une île*. This

paper examines the specificities of such fictional representations of the posthuman both from a literary and an ideological perspective against the background of influential posthuman theories such as those of Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles and Rosi Braidotti. It focuses on the blurring of accepted boundaries between the human and the animal, the organic and the mechanic, the embodied and the virtual while referring to current debates around post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism. All these issues will be addressed through a careful study of the clones in Ishiguro's and Houellebecq's novels, with a special emphasis on their thought processes, strategies of socialisation and physical configurations. Lastly, this paper will examine how the literary posthuman as represented in contemporary mainstream novels has moved away from the traditional confines of science fiction and recorded complex negotiations with other genres such as the speculative novel and the *Bildungsroman*.

Christina Schneider, PhD Candidate, Graduate School of the Humanities of the Julius-Maximillians-University Würzburg

"Never Let Me Go: A Posthumanist Dystopia?"

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005) portrays a specific kind of technoutopian transhuman idealism, namely eternal health, and its consequences. In contrast to posthuman ideals of humans being embedded in their environment and structurally coupled to it, Ishiguro evokes a future where transhuman fantasies end in the reduction of human and humanoid beings to their genes and the value of these genes. *Never Let Me Go* furthermore raises questions of what constitutes a human or posthuman/transhuman being and whether clones are human or posthuman beings. Like cyborgs, clones are liminal figures which question traditional humanism by their very existence. Which (ethical) questions about (post)humanism clones raise and what their implications for our society are, will – among other topics – be discussed in my paper. *Never Let Me Go* likewise points out how limited and fallible human intelligence and humanist ideals are and that consciousness, morality, emotions, language, and creativity are no longer a unique characteristic of human nature.

My plan is to analyse the various posthuman and transhuman strands of the novel and to examine how transhuman ideals are used as criticism in a posthuman argument. Moreover, it will be important to notice the implications this criticism has for real life political topics, such as stem cell research for example. Thus, the novel also points towards a crisis in humanness and the treatment of the human body or genes. It will also be shown that the desire to move beyond mere human nature might implicate to leave humane ideals and morals behind, including compassion with other living beings. In order to analyse the posthuman and transhuman threads of the novel I want to take into account, among other criticism, Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto*, since both the cyborg and the clone can be seen as embodiments of posthumanism.

Carole Sweeney, Senior Lecturer, University of London (Goldsmiths)

"Posthumanism and the Disappearance of Desire in Michel Houellebecq"

Advancements in biotechnology, genetic therapy, and eugenic sciences have allowed twenty-first century Western society to edge ever closer towards to what might, plausibly, be called a post-human conception of identity. In his second and third novels, *Atomised* and *The Possibility of an Island*, Michel Houellebecq, arguably the most famous living French writer, examines the hypothesis that 'humanity must disappear' and give way to something that no longer requires the idea of 'individuality, individuation and progress' or 'even the idea of an underlying reality'. Assailed at every turn by aggressive libidinal economies, Houellebecq's characters move around in atomised spaces in a 'miserable and troubled' age in which people live out 'lonely, bitter lives' in which affective feelings of 'love, tenderness and human fellowship have all but disappeared.

Atomised ends with a metaphysical and biogenetic mutation that transforms the human species into clones possessing no genetic distinctiveness, a new race of humanity which has completely 'outgrown individuality, individuation and progress'. No longer compelled to depend upon the serendipity of sexual encounters and intimate relationships for the fulfilment of affective life, the posthuman clones are able to fully auto-eroticise and, more crucially in Houellebecq's vision, love without pain. ' Abandoning any possibility of either social or political intercession, both novels suggest a posthuman, biopolitical solution to the problem of a radical disenchantment with capitalism. In different ways then, both novels posit the erasure, both bio-genetic and ontological, of extant humanity and the creation of a genetically identical, asexual posthumanity called neohumans. This, then, is the consequence of the suicide of the West with which *Atomised* begins. Sanctioned by the 'The Movement for Human Potential' (founded in 2011) a 'paradigm shift' takes place towards the conclusion of *Atomised* describes the last gasp of twentieth-century humanism that has been replaced by the supremacy of technologism that 'open(s) up a new era in world history'.

In *The Possibility of an Island*, Houellebecq continues to imagine this posthuman race in which all the volatile emotions of happiness, love and fear have been eradicated. The difficult and agonizing processes of human happiness and intimacy have been cured through by technically correcting the affective potentiality of the posthumans in a process of radical desublimation.

Panel 11 (B106): Posthuman Economics
(Chair: Martin Leer, University of Geneva)

Ann Keniston, Associate Professor, University of Nevada

"Posthuman Economics: Systems of Exchange in Christian Bök's Recent Sequences"

The posthuman is often associated with a subject matter—involving robots, cyborgs, and the like—and with the media of film and video games. But my paper claims that

the posthuman also offers a lens, and indeed a methodology, through which to examine a wider range of texts, including those without nonhuman protagonists. "Posthuman Economics" extends Katherine Hayles's argument that the posthuman emphasizes "circulat[ion]" and "patterns" by claiming that recent posthuman texts interrogate systems of exchange central to contemporary culture. These systems are sometimes formal and bodily; they are often also economic or proto-economic, especially evident in depictions of buying and selling, gambling, commodification, and the like. Paying attention to this motif, I argue, exposes (and also answers) a question fundamental to posthuman discourse: to what extent can the posthuman free itself from humanly created (and dehumanizing) systems?

My paper answers this question by reading two recent sequences by the contemporary Canadian conceptual poet Christian Bök. I begin with a brief discussion of Bök's ongoing *The Xenotext Experiment,* in which the posthuman (as well as posthumanist) is especially evident: Bök here transcribes poetic language into DNA code inserted into a living organism to preserve this language and also to generate additional, not-humanly-composed text. The project thus undermines the split between the humanistic and the scientific as it emphasizes the nonhuman and indeed posthuman. Bök has framed this project in (proto-)economic terms, referring both to its superiority to more ephemeral methods of textual preservation and to the $100,000 grant that funded it.

I then turn to a reading of Bök's 2001 *Eunoia*. This sequence, which includes five sections, each a series of prose paragraphs composed of all (or nearly all) the English words using one of the five vowels, is often read as a purely conceptual project, associated with the French traditions of Oulipo and pataphysics, about which Bok has written. My reading, though, emphasizes the combined excisions and excesses of Bök's form, a paradoxical combination also evident in the actions of the sequence's characters, who gamble, tax, exploit workers, buy sex, shop, and consume. Such activities, I argue, expose questions about power and politics often seen as antithetical to the conceptual and (sometimes) the posthuman. By yoking apparently randomly generated text to rigid rules about economic interchange, Bok reveals that systems—both poetic and economic—are both random and inescapable. While these systems can't be easily abandoned, Bök insists that they can be manipulated from within. In this way, Bök implies that the posthuman—the mechanical, depersonalized, and systemic—can help ensure the continuation, albeit in a different form, of both the humanities and the human.

Dr. Thomas D. Philbeck, Global Leadership Fellow, World Economic Forum

"Posthumanism and the Marketplace"

In this presentation, I will argue and provide evidence for the thesis that the posthumanist notion of the decentred human as a distributed network and a locus for an aggregated form of agency is being used to develop technologies and to direct economic enterprise through the construction of posthuman "bodies". These bodies

include, for example, corporeally integrated virtual reality devices, exoskeletons, nanotech, prostheses, and the like, as well as posthuman bodies that go beyond technological devices and extend to organizations and their decision making capabilities, such as the integration of artificial intelligence and complex analytics into corporate decision making at the C-Suite level. This presentation will demonstrate real world scenarios that exemplify the manifestation of posthumanist theoretical approaches and the concomitant complications of agency. It will show the leap from theory to practice through technologies that are both now available and shortly being brought to market. Through examples of posthuman bodies and the assemblage of functional and decorative technologies that are now available, the decentred posthuman (epistemologically, socially, psychologically) that we are familiar with through a variety of academic discourses, such as Actor Network Theory, Social Construction of Technology, Science & Technology Studies, will highlight the current state of affairs in the development of key technologies that integrate this notion of distributed agency into objects and practice, and will show how the realization of this distribution of agency is redefining the context of the human at the political level of the marketplace.

Ulfried Reichardt, Professor, University of Mannheim

"Post/Individuality, Post/Humanism, and De/Formations of the Self within Organizations: Herman Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener' and David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*"

"We prefer not to use the term 'profitable,' the CTO said. 'We prefer the term 'noncompliant.'" (David Foster Wallace, *The Pale King*, 335)

The starting point of my paper is the observation that most expositions of posthumanism as a recent theoretical orientation cite developments such as digitalization, bioengineering, and globalization as defining developments. I would like to point out that these contain a strong economic component and are measured to a large degree in terms of money. Therefore, economics in a wider sense has to be taken into consideration when exploring the posthuman. My focus will be on subjectivities within corporations and organizations. As posthumanism has to negotiate liberal humanism, concepts attempting to grasp contemporary forms of subjectivity (corporate, neoliberal, postmodern) seem highly adequate. I want to investigate these dimensions of subjectivity within the theoretical framework of the posthuman by looking at two major US-American fictional texts – "Bartleby, the Scrivener" and *The Pale King*. The link between agency, liberty, and a strong conception of the individual can be observed in US-American culture in a privileged way, yet its critique as well. Reading the two texts in conjunction will show important diagnostic continuities within American literature. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze's and Giorgio Agamben's interpretations of Melville's story, which itself radically tests the limits of the human, will open up my reading to their philosophical arguments exploring the human in relation to forms of the posthuman. The aim is to extend

posthumanist discourse into the field of the critical study of organizations and connect it more intricately with the debate about neoliberalism ("human capital," "the corporate self").

Panel 12 (B112): Environmental (Post)humanities
(Chair: Arnaud Barras, University of Geneva)

Fani Cettl, PhD Candidate, Central European University

"A Contemporary Imaginary of Ecology: The Case of *Avatar*"

In this presentation I start from the recent widely popular science fictional film *Avatar* (2009), a simplified postcolonial and ecological critique of western modernity, as a good starting point to explore a particular notion – that of "animism", and what can be considered its posthumanist meanings. While clearly perpetuating Latour's modernist binaries, between the human and nonhuman, machine and organism, science and belief, centre and colony, etc., the film also briefly calls attention to a possible compatibility between a scientific biological and animist staging of life. Following this cue from the film, I enter the recent theoretical discussions of animism, from posthumanist and anthropological literature, which is also invested in the questions of ecology: Jane Bennett, Bruno Latour, Jeremy Narby, Eduardo Kohn. Through discussing this scholarship, two important points are brought to the fore: 1) a shift from the understanding of ecology as something that humans do in order to protect something called nature, towards the notion of political ecology, as the relations between human and nonhuman agencies; 2) a shift from the understanding of animism as a pre-modern, non-western spiritual belief in materiality animated by spirits (incompatible with science), towards animism as a political ecology in which nonhuman agencies figure prominently, and as a staging of nature compatible with the scientific, particularly biological constructions of life.

Seline Reinhardt, PhD Candidate, University of Bern

"Caught between Gaia and the Anthropocene - Reflecting Religiosity and the Posthuman in Climate Change Discourse"

In this day and age, in which global warming is a man-made fact, environmentalism wishes for the renunciation of anthropocentrism. It is no coincidence, then, that one very influential systemic approach to our planet and its climate is named after a superhuman – and not just any superhuman, but our Mother Earth Gaia. Harbouring Gaia theory, said day and age itself, however, bears our name: Because of our central role to the planet's climate, it now entered into the 'anthropocene.' A paradox?

Climate change discourse negotiates the place and role of the human in the universe and, therefore, our notions of 'science,' religion,' and knowledge' in general, and, not lastly, 'nature' and the 'human'. Drawing on popular scientific scenarios of climate change, this paper complements the negotiation and examines the figurations

of the post-human in this context – as superhuman, anto-anthropocentric, as well as the actual *post* human: a world *after* the existence of the human species. Reflecting upon issues like these, this paper hopes to clarify our perception of climate change and thus to contribute to the enablement of agency vis-à-vis climate change and our (future) environment at peril.

Maris Sõrmus, PhD Candidate, Tallinn University

"New Materialist and Posthumanist Ethics: Our Naturalcultural Future as Envisioned by Monique Roffey"

A new voice in British-Caribbean literature, Monique Roffey turns a delicate eye to nature in all her novels. Be it the green woman in *The White Woman on the Green Bicycle* (2009), the flowering human in *Sun Dog* (2002), or the tempting seascape in *Archipelago* (2012), Roffey portrays a posthuman world where humans and nonhumans are no longer dichotomous. I set out elucidating how they are transformed beyond recognition, shattering anthropocentric core of the concepts of agency, body, and voice. Situated in the new materialist paradigm, I follow from such reconceptualisations in the currently emerging material ecocriticism, also referred to as "non-anthropocentric humanism" or "feminist ecocriticism with posthuman alliances" (Oppermann 2013).

   In this view, Roffey mingles nature with humans as a Subject, threatening anthropo-normativity and envisioning an uncannily different reality: nature as a speaking agentive body that initiates the novel's conflict or haunts humans with the trauma following climate change. Being articulate and having also a family, nature emerges as a cultural creature, uncannily entangled with culture. Further compelling is the naturalisation of culture: the human body undergoing environmental changes (e.g. blossoming), forming a porous naturalcultural body. Nature and culture truly collapse, suggesting the posthuman body as a material-discursive phenomenon. These organic interconnections also provide an alternative male gendering of nature and provoke the composite co-becoming of the human and the nonhuman. The dissolution of the binary logic foregrounds the "unpredictable becomings of other creatures and the limits of human knowledge" (Alaimo 2010), provoking further the question what happens to literary analysis in the posthumanities perspective. Thinking with Alaimo, Barad, Haraway, and Braidotti, I am engaging with the posthumanist ethic enfleshed by Roffey: instead of nature/culture, we are faced with their trans-corporeal "intra-active" entanglement – and inextricably so.

12:30 – 14:00   Lunch

14:00 – 15:30   **Panel of papers 13 + 14 + 15**

Panel 13 (B101): Posthumanist Philosophy and Theory
(Chair: Thomas Claviez, University of Bern)

Ryan Kopaitich, PhD Candidate, University of Bern

"Why Another Post-____? Posthumanism, Panpsychism, and Object-Oriented Ontology"

Recent approaches to philosophy of mind by Galen Strawson and David Chalmers, and attempts at an Object-Oriented Philosophy most notably implemented in the work of Graham Harman, have ventured beyond any sort of humanism in thinking theories of consciousness and ontological concerns. In fact, a synthetic analysis of such ideas seems to suggest that the posthuman, as a heuristic designation, may be a limiting rather than liberating framing of various ecological, literary, ontological, and epistemic problems. What I want to investigate is how serious contemporary approaches to panpsychism in philosophy of mind work toward an ontological re-framing of the human and human relationships to the world. Here, I will suggest that language's common conception is one reason we cleave to humanism in the desire to be post-humanist, and offer some thoughts on language that extend the traditionally human-centric inquiries of metaphysics and epistemology into a non-relational and non-anthropocentric domain.

Viola Marchi, PhD Candidate, University of Bern

"Impersonal Existence: Rethinking Agency and Responsibility Beyond the Person"

Against the belief that ethics is an inherently human affair – one the fundamental tenets of the history of Western moral theory - the recent developments in environmental ethics and posthuman philosophy have attempted to conceptualize a more productive and comprehensive account of ethical relations, outside the domain of the human. However, I believe that conceiving of posthuman ethics as "trans-species empathy" or by extending the characteristics of personhood to the non-human, does not effectively challenge the anthropocentrism of traditional approaches. This paper argues for a rethinking of ethical relationality through the concept of the impersonal, as developed in Emmanuel Levinas's approach to ontology, Maurice Blanchot's understanding of the literary, and Roberto Esposito's account of biopolitics. Its aim is to suggest a new configuration of modes of agency and responsibility by investigating both notions outside the domain of the personal and beyond the logic of subjects and objects, agents and patients.

Angus McBlane, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Technology – Gandhinagar

"Expressing the World: Phenomenology and Posthumanism"

This paper is organized around an evaluation of the intertwining of phenomenology and posthumanism. Posthumanist philosophy is, simply put, a model of philosophical inquiry and interrogation which does not take as its starting or its end point the human. While it may be concerned with the human *as such* or a human in an experiential mode this should not be to the detriment of the myriad of other beings

which express alongside the human. It may be concerned with notions of the posthuman, but this does not mean that there is a being which is or comes after 'man' or the human or that it signals a merging of humanity and technology as such. Rather, posthuman is simply a designation, an already established designation, which signals a certain kind of philosophizing. It is a form of philosophical interrogation firmly planted in everyday experience – not only 'mine' or the 'human' but yours and other beings.

Therefore, for all the talk of potentially transgressive machine acts (intentional machines, integration of humans and technology and so forth) and the cultural, philosophical, and ethical ramifications that they may have on humans little, or, rather, not enough has been written about what posthumanist philosophy actually is. The question for this paper is not whether phenomenology is posthumanist in the sense that it is attendant to the bifurcations and exclusions inherent within humanism which has developed into a mode of cultural criticism and analysis, rather it is in ascertaining if phenomenology, particularly in its Merleau-Pontyan and existential phenomenological mode, contributes or signals a beginning of posthumanist philosophy, or, rather, of posthumanist forms of philosophizing. As such, this paper is an interrogation of particular phenomenological concepts, principally geared around expression, world, and corporeality, and evaluates their efficacy for a posthumanist philosophy. Posthumanist philosophy as a form and method for twenty-first century philosophy remains nascent.

Panel 14 (B106): The Modern Posthuman
(Chair: Valerie Fehlbaum, University of Geneva)

Stefan Danter, PhD Candidate, University of Mannheim

"Back to the Future: American Naturalism and Posthuman Autonomy"

It is impossible to engage posthumanism and its effect on human subjectivity without taking into account its complex relationship with the tradition of liberal humanism. Critics such as Stefan Herbrechter, Cary Wolfe and Neil Badmington convincingly argue that the posthuman is always already part of the human (and vice versa) and that this interdependence makes it neither possible nor desirable to cut all ties with the humanist tradition. The paper argues that, since both concepts are intricately linked, applying contemporary posthumanist theory to a literary period previously unnoticed by posthuman scholarship can reveal new connections. In American naturalism these issues become particularly relevant, since naturalist novels emphasize non-human agency, such as that of the ocean or of animals, while deconstructing human subjectivity and thereby questioning the primacy of rational thought and linear causality in making sense of the world. Thus, it can shed light on the complex interaction between liberal humanist ideals of subjectivity, autonomy and agency on the one hand and posthuman concepts of relationality, emergence and flexibility on the other. Using Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" (1897), this paper will

demonstrate the value of a posthumanist rereading to conceive of the human subject as part of a complex web of actors rather than as a self-controlled and fully autonomous center. The story questions humanist ideals of subjectivity, control, and agency and emphasizes the role of nature as indifferent but nevertheless influential agent. A posthumanist rereading will contextualize this development and illustrate that naturalism was one of the starting points for what today might be called a posthuman relational autonomy. Furthermore, the paper serves as a demonstration of an analytical approach to a posthuman reading of literature that applies across genres and periods.

Ben Tam, PhD Candidate, Cornell University

"Unfeeling Love: Inventing New Relations in D.H. Lawrence"

Is love possible in the posthuman age? This question would come to encapsulate an unresolved conundrum surrounding the interpretation of D. H. Lawrence's 1915 novel, *The Rainbow*. While preparing the novel, Lawrence proclaims in a letter that the novel will represent "a new relation between the sexes" that departs from what he dismisses as the idealization of romantic love, understood as "an ineffable transfusion between two people." But in the same letter, he also strikingly announces that, in conceiving his characters, he is not interested in what a person "feels," but only what is person "IS"—"inhumanly, physiologically, materially." What does it mean, then, to invent a new human relation while depriving the individual characters of their ability to "feel"? And how can love, indeed, be recognized as such if it refuses to subscribe to the conventional feelings that make it legible in the first place? This paper is an attempt to explore Lawrence's de-psychologization of love in the context of Lawrence's own newfound aesthetic in Futurism. At the heart of this aesthetic, I suggest, is a rupture of a radical paradox between self-discovery and self-disappearance, figured in the text as a mutually-obliterating relation between light as a figure of self-knowledge and light as a figure of self-extension that undercuts knowledge, that makes futile any phenomenological reading of love. Lawrence's refusal to turn love into a phenomenon or merely a version of Futurist materialism, I will further argue, may be understood as his attempt to resist the increasing aestheticization, and therefore politicization, of love at a time when the pastoralizing rhetoric of humanism became a necessary component of eugenicist ideology. By disfiguring the basic human capacity to "feel," then, Lawrence's de-aestheticization of love offers a truly political way of rethinking love, of countering the impossible and necessary equation of love and humanism, that exceeds what is humanly possible.

Gabriel Renggli, PhD Candidate, University of York

Woolf with Deleuze: Metonymical Bodies in *Mrs Dalloway*

Literary modernisms are often brought into connection with a new subjectivity that arises around the same point in history, with the political and cultural upheavals that

inform this subjectivity, and with a poetic agenda of monumentality, classicism, and linguistic purity developed in opposition to these former aspects.

In my paper, I propose that whereas such approaches are pertinent, we should not focus on the human psyche at the expense of the human body when contextualising the challenge of modernist writing. Addressing the question of whether we can identify any mode of writing the material body as specifically modernist, I examine the representation of bodies by developing the category of the *metonymical body*.

Reading passages from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "body without organs" as well as through Avital Ronell's theorising of what she calls "stupidity," I suggest that the metonymical body's suspension between anti-productive volatility and productive inertia reveals a strand of modernist writing that exchanges stability and monumentality for a mutability and mobility more typically associated with post-modernism.

Panel 15 (B112): Posthuman Borders
(Chair: Kangqin Li, University of Leicester)

Arnaud Barras, PhD Candidate, University of Geneva

"Towards a Postcolonial Ecopoetics of Relationality: Journeying Through the Borders of Self in Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*"

From the 1960s onwards, intellectual movements of contestation have interrogated the concept of "the human" as a separate individuality. Postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, environmentalism and feminism have begun challenging the mechanistic, instrumentalist and dualistic assumptions of Western epistemology. In many ways, these movements of contestation have paved the way for a conception of the human not as a bounded and discrete individuality, but as *an embodied and embedded consciousness caught up in a meshwork of interactive relations*. Against the individuality of the human, posthumanist perspectives offer the *relationality of becoming*. In this essay, I will argue that Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book* epitomizes the posthumanist shift to a relational self. In this complex narrative system that combines poststructural, postcolonial, and ecofeminist undertones, Wright enables the reader to experience the dissolution of the bounded notion of Self.

The protagonist of the novel is the mute Aboriginal girl Oblivion Ethyl(ene), or Oblivia. After her rape by a gang of petrol-sniffing youths, Oblivia is silenced, marginalized, traumatized, traditionalized: she is left for dead by her family, despised by her community and married by force to an Aboriginal president of Australia whom she does not even know. However, Oblivia is able to overcome her dire situation by transcending her Self through stories. In what can be coined a posthumanist Aboriginal mode of characterization, combining postmodern and Aboriginal counter-epistemologies, Wright establishes a postcolonial ecopoetics of relationality where

Oblivia is made to reconstruct a more suitable environment for herself by combining foreign folk stories about swans with Aboriginal dreamings, and by then juxtaposing this combination onto her direct surroundings. In this metaleptic storyworld, Oblivia becomes an intertextual-intersubjective-transcultural-being: she becomes an epitome of the posthuman. As Oblivia overcomes her individuality, her culture and her body, through empathy the reader is made to journey along with her through the borders of self.

David E. Isaacs, Associate Professor, California Baptist University

"Crossing Borders in Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer*"

Alex Rivera's 2008 film *Sleep Dealer* explores issues of the posthuman identity. By using the cyborg trope, Rivera explores how those living on the Mexico-U.S. border get shaped both by their natural geography but even more so by manmade boundaries. Mexican laborers do not have to cross the heavily militarized border to service the U.S.; instead, they can "plug into" machines as "node workers" to control robots that do their work for them.

Characters Memo and Rudy—both cyborgs—must learn what it means to be human in an inhumane society. Rivera challenges our notions of how human identity has changed as we have become more connected through technology. He then applies the false promises of online connectivity with the plight of the migrant worker: "The problem is that the worker comes with a body. . . . So keep the body outside of the United States. Suck its energy and leave the cadaver or the problematic shell out of the picture" (Rivera, in Silverman). Thus, Rivera plays with the idea of disconnecting labor from people. Memo is a fugitive from his home but unable to cross the border—he is stuck in a no-man's land. Likewise, Rudy is more privileged but detached; the more he connects to the technology as a virtual pilot, the more he ironically finds himself disconnected emotionally as a man. Like many exiles, these two do not quite fit where they are but feel they have nowhere else they can go. This longing—for home, stability, and meaning—forms the emotional geography of the film. As the characters approach the border, so Rivera offers a way of understanding the longings of immigrants even as he critiques current border politics. Thus, Rivera seeks to destabilize border politics through the decentered posthuman figure. This paper explores how he does this through using the cyborg trope and such film techniques as *mise-en-scene* and object-images as discussed by Hamid Naficy.

Sofia Varino, PhD Candidate, Stony Brook University

"Cyborg Cere: Performing the Posthuman Body in Cherrie Moraga's *Heroes and Saints*"

While the explicit political enunciations in Cherrie Moraga's 1992 play *Heroes and Saints* strongly resonate with urgent environmental issues, my paper argues for its most potent radical agency in relation to Donna Haraway's foundational text *A*

Cyborg Manifesto (1985), and its icon of (post)feminism: the cyborg. The play mobilizes feminist aesthetics and biopolitics alongside medical, environmental and disability discourses, in a piece where the magical realism of Chicano theater converges with postmodern aesthetics in the cyborg figure of Cere. A female head born without a body due to a congenital deformity caused by chemical exposure to pesticides, Cere is plausible as a cyborg in so far as hers is an apocalyptic world where the organic and the mechanical have merged in a convoluted relationship. In her environment, ancient agricultural practices and the industrial production of pesticides collide to formulate a posthuman embodiment constituted by a human head and by the rolling platform to which she is bound. Functioning both as device and as organ, the mechanism interrupts our species expectations to postulate a hybrid corporeality from which Cere can perform the cyborg task of conflating nature and culture, the human and the nonhuman. Applying ecocriticism and technoscience studies alongside feminist theories of embodiement as critical frames, my paper locates Cere as a posthuman figure whose very presence destabilizes fixed identities, whether based on ethnicity, gender or disability. Where borders become permeable, fertile crossings can come to pass, and it is this process of becoming that I investigate, attempting to trace the new ontological choreographies Moraga's play proposes towards a possible, if uncertain, common future.

15:30 – 16:00   Coffee break

16:00 – 17:00   **Keynote Speech (B106): Cary Wolfe**
                       "The Poetics of Extinction"
                       (Chair: Bryn Skibo-Birney, University of Geneva)

This lecture explores the poetics of extinction in two contemporary art installations mounted in the Fall of 2014: "Requiem: *Ectopistes Migratorius"* by Michael Pestel, and "Trout Fishing in America and Other Stories," by Mark Wilson and Bryndis Snaebjornsdottir. Both installations show us that, even when limiting ourselves to the domain of birds alone, extinction is never a generic or "natural" event. Both installations focus on extinct or nearly extinct kinds of birds: the former, on the Passenger Pigeon, which became extinct on September 1, 1914 (a curious fact in itself—knowing the exact date of the extinction of an entire species), and the latter, on the California Condor in and around the environs of the Grand Canyon in Arizona. In working through elements of both works, this lecture will explore the resonance for thinking the question of extinction of Jacques Derrida's contention in *The Beast and Sovereign, Volume 2*, that "the question is indeed that of the world." What worlds are lost when a species becomes extinct, and what world is left to us? How do these questions relate to issues of ethics and responsibility for forms of life so different from our own?

19:30   Conference dinner (Café Papon)

9:00 – 10:00   <u>Workshop 1 (B112)</u>:
Jeffrey Jerome Cohen – "Elemental Ecology"

<u>Description:</u> The world was once thought to have been formed from earth, air, fire and water in varying combinations, held together by complex chains of love and pulled apart by entropic strife. Outgrown as a science and replaced by atomism and particle physics, elemental theory has been left behind, but with more knowledge has come an estrangement from materiality rather than greater worldly intimacy. We continue to speak of the elements, but as something to protect ourselves against. In the wake of tsunamis, earthquakes, and superstorms, we know well elemental strife. Yet what about nonhuman love? What invitations to the posthuman do the elements and their admixtures continue to offer? Is there a promise in the impossible, in the purely imaginary, in the abandoned and the unreal?

<u>Reading for discussion:</u> "The Eleven Principles of the Elements" (Cohen and Duckert)

10:00 – 10:30   Coffee Break

10:30 – 12:00   **Panel of papers 16 + 17 + 18**

Panel 16 (B101): The Posthuman in Sci-Fi and Fantasy
(Chair: Rachel Nisbet, University of Lausanne)

Prof. Curtis Carbonell, Asst. Professor, Khalifa University

"Hyper-embodied Science Fiction"

'Science fictionality' is an overlooked mode of discourse for the 'posthuman.' While critical posthumanism's primary aim has been to continue the critique of the Enlightenment project's liberal humanist subject, the 'posthuman' is a literary trope with a highly represented fictive historiography, if not a fully theorized one. In today's world the post(modern)human is still located within Jameson's cultural logic of late capitalism, yet often emerges haunted by a nostalgia for a rational subject that was never stable but has accelerated toward radical transformation. Some view the distribution of the self across networks and assemblages as already a fact of the real world. Some also view the invasion of the machine (or the artificial) now crossing critical boundaries. Some, of course, praise these disruptions as a process of becoming. My paper explores how key texts as widely distributed as a traditional SF novel to overlooked tabletop role-playing games uniquely contribute to the nascent trans-and-posthuman discourses. It also helps remonstrate the conflicted genres of SF

and fantasy. I argue that the imagined differences between the genres are unhelpful and, worse, an ineffectual attempt at denigration by American literary studies. This paper focuses on the posthuman as an imagined telos for both SF writers and hopeful transhumanists in the real world. In the end, this paper theorizes that gaming studies helps were literary studies falters because, for example, the posthumans imagined in novels and tabletop role-playing games are prototypes for posthumans to come. Thus, these fantastic games, in particular, not only show us that SF and fantasy are inseparable twins, but they function as mechanisms in the very real, material construction of trans-and posthuman subjects.

Luke Hortle, PhD Candidate, University of Tasmania

"… it's still a cloud an' so is a soul": Posthumanism, Neohumanism and the Human in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*

David Mitchell's literary blockbuster *Cloud Atlas* (2004) is touted as an exemplary posthuman text. In our contemporary posthumanist milieu, Mitchell's oeuvre raises important questions regarding current theoretical thinking about the human and its emergence from text. This paper reads the tensions between the posthuman and the human in Mitchell's novel, arguing that the work of posthumanism is carried out in literature as well as critical theory. It proposes a reappraisal of *Cloud Atlas* at a time when the human has been foregrounded on an unprecedented scale; the Anthropocene frames the human as a figure of phenomenal agency faced with the prospect of its imminent demise. The paper explores the novel's neohumanist disruptions to posthumanism by examining the novel's representation of human embodiment, agency and textual artifice, and consequently provides a counterpoint to current trends in scholarship about the novel. *Cloud Atlas* pits posthumanist concerns (including the trope of clones, as well as the human's imbrication with text and language) against the emergence of a neohumanist human presence (transcending embodiment and materiality through features of textuality, including the novel's six nested stories and the symbolic comet birthmark). Ultimately this paper asks if we are witnessing a resurgence of the human as a liberal humanist subject—a "neohumanism"—in contemporary fiction? Does *Cloud Atlas* evince what Claire Colebrook observes in recent theory, where the posthumanist "dethroning of humanity" ushers in a "humanist relapse"? Consequently, the paper will explore how Mitchell's novel operates as a literary marker of anxieties over the rise of posthumanist theory and the prospect of a brutally posthuman future.

Panel 17 (B106): Posthuman Bodies: Gender, Sex, and Race
(Chair: Amy Brown, University of Geneva)

Charlotte Jones, PhD Candidate, University of Sheffield

"(Inter)sexing the Post-human Body"

Elizabeth Reis opens her genealogy of American intersex treatment, *Bodies in Doubt*, by asking what it means to be human. Questions such as this have brought Judith Butler (2004, p.4) to observe that the intersex advocacy movement 'offers a critical perspective on the version of "the human" that requires ideal morphologies and the constraining of bodily norms'. It is, in fact, the ongoing process of being 'physically sexed and culturally gendered' which Reis identifies as particular to the human, but – as with many other scholars in the field of intersex studies – Reis's 'critical perspective' does not seek to erode a notion of the human altogether, but ensure that intersex is incorporated within it. Elsewhere, Sharon Preves (2003, p.xi) celebrates her dialogue with intersex participants as evidence of the 'resilience of the human spirit', Systma (2006, p.xx) equates 'becoming educated about intersex' with learning 'what it means to be a human being' and Callahan (2009, p.9) locates critical sex scholarship itself as definitively human.

Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, and more recently, Hilary Malatino (2009, p.93) have drawn our attention to the 'materially and psychically violent, modern/colonial taxonomies of the 'human''. These taxonomies do not only prescribe what can be included in the category of the human, but also determine the less-than-human, the monstrous (Shildrick, 2011) and those therefore outside of the domain of ethics. Whilst acknowledging other critical sex scholars' limited attempts to 'refigure' (McRuer, 2009, p.245) and 'remake' (Butler, 2004, p.4) the human, this paper seeks to explore a potential for resistance to sexual dimorphism *beyond* 'the human'. In particular, it considers how intersex challenges the stability of the human, the benefits that critiquing the human may offer for intersexed people and other disenfranchised groups, and the ways in which critical sex scholarship and intersex activists can advocate for bodily autonomy without defending the 'rights of the human'.

Anas Sareen, Masters student, University of Lausanne

"The Untranslatable and the Sovereign: Terror, and the Species Divide"

Among "circulation narratives," and other so-called "it narratives," which flourish in the eighteenth century, the fairy tale is another literary genre where cross-species encounters, anthropomorphism, and metamorphosis abound. In the case of Mme de Beaumont's French rewriting of the *Beauty and the Beast* tale (1756), metamorphosis can be conceived of in terms of a cross-species translation as a hybrid beast is turned into a human sovereign through love. Despite the process of embodied translation that shows animality to be erased at the end of the tale, an untranslatable beastly body emerges in the moral. Indeed, one of the little girls listening to the tale told by her mistress declares that, like Beauty, she too is no longer afraid of a beast, having gotten used to little black servant hired by her father by "no longer thinking of his face." In this paper, I argue that the violent erasure of the little boy's face is predicated on multiple levels of unintelligibility which materialize when we focus on the ambiguities produced by the French word for the Beast: *la bête*. Assembling stupidity, sexuality, animality, and race into one unreasonable body, "la bête" is a site

of untranslatability situated at the threshold of the "human." Facing the reasonable Enlightened subject, and figured as the absolute opposite of the sovereign, *la bête* gestures towards the violence that configures the species divide in the eighteenth century, and makes the shifting politics of what counts as "human" materialize.

Panel 18 (B112): The Posthuman in Cinema
(Chair: Azamat Rakhimov, University of Geneva)

Norberto Gomez, Jr., Independent Artist and Regular Contributor to *Digital America*

Animal Holocaust; Human, After All: Representations of Animal Exploitation in Shock and Horror Cinema

Where have all the animals gone? We are knee deep in the zombie apocalypse, and yet, rarely will contemporary zombie media feature the non-human animal, or, the resurgence of nature. As the transhorizon of a compressed globe becomes ever more saturated, the Other has increasingly become no-one. With all privacy documented, and archived, and when all the mysteries of the Amazon are Google mapped and geo-tagged, all we are left with are our network friends and the animals. If, today, there are no strangers, and we are all the same, all zombie, then only the non-human lives on as the final Other with the power to redefine the human-species. This paper traces the development of animal exploitation in shock and horror cinema as seen in the mondo, zombie, and cannibal genres and its relationship to the posthuman condition. The animal is used as the final tool of humanism, serving the walking-dead human in cinema while real suffering in the factory farm industry remains censored. Contemporary cinema and popular culture, from new zombie and cannibal films, to chef Anthony Bourdain's Parts Unknown (CNN) are also analyzed.

Scott Loren, Research Associate, University of St. Gallen

"Remote Andros: Masculinity and the Cinematic Male Body as Liminal Space"

Cinematic representations of thresholds, screens, and bodily surfaces often act as tropes that signal transition and ambiguity. They "try to conceptualize a liminal situation, a not quite here but also not quite there configuration, an in-betweenness of sorts in which film functions as a threshold and space of passage … as a 'liminal space'" (Elsaesser and Hagener 38).[1] At the close of John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), for example, Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) stands in an open doorway at the threshold between domestic civility and the wild frontier landscape. The door in this scene acts as a motif for movement from one diegetic space (home and familiarity) to another (adventure and uncertainty), while also marking a space of cultural perception on gendered identity. Thus while the liminal can become a function ideational trope through visual metaphors at the diegetic level, it is also working on an extra-diegetic level where cinema acts as a space for projecting and negotiating uncertainty or

transition in the cultural imaginary. This is doubly true for representation of the posthuman. The posthuman and posthumanism are fundamentally liminal figuration: they mark an ambiguous space of transition and facilitate thought beyond conventions of embodied identity, subjectivity and anthropocentric technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988). Against a conceptual background of cinematic and posthumanist liminality, and taking into account ways in which gender discourses have been central to both – from the hero myth as a characteristically male cinematic archetype and Mulvey's notion of the male gaze (1973/1975) in film theory to Haraway's seminal Cyborg feminism (1983, 1985, 1991) – my talk will show how masculinity is mediated as and through liminal spaces of cinematic posthumanism in key scenes from three contemporary films: Katherine Bigalow's *The Hurt Locker* (2008), James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009) and Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013).

1 Elsaesser, Thomas and Malte Hagener. *Film Theory: an Introduction through the senses*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Hannah Stark, Post-doctoral Lecturer, University of Tasmania

"Neohumanism in the Anthropocene: Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive*"

Against the backdrop of a decaying Detroit, Jim Jarmusch's 2013 film, *Only Lovers Left Alive*, sees vampire couple Adam and Eve bearing witness to the Anthropocene. The 'Motor City' setting speaks of economic and social decay through the failure of the automobile industry, and the depiction of abandoned civic buildings. But it also points to the attendant environmental effect of human industry, in this case, one that has produced the classic American cars that have contributed to pollution and had a direct impact on the climate. The vampires at the centre of this sparse and languid narrative have a privileged vantage point from which to witness the devastation of the earth. Their perspective takes us beyond the human and, because they are immortal, invites us to contemplate the more-than-human timescales that envisaging global warming requires.

　　　　This paper asks: what stories do we tell ourselves about the human in this time of environmental uncertainty? It reads Jarmusch's film as exemplary of broader engagement with the Anthropocene in contemporary texts and interrogates the vision of the 'human' at its centre. Exploring the representation of nostalgia, human exceptionalism, and excessive heterosexuality in *Only Lovers Left Alive*, this paper examines the tensions between the posthumanist imperative to think 'beyond the human' and the neohumanist return to tropes of humanness in contemporary cultural production.

12:00 – 13:00　　　　Lunch

13:00 – 14:00　　　　**Keynote Speech (B106): Margrit Shildrick**
　　　　　　　　　　　　"Immuno-politics and Chimerism:
　　　　　　　　　　　　　Decentering Human Singularity"
　　　　　　　　　　(Chair: Kimberly Frohreich, University of Geneva)

The presentation draws on biomedical research, including my own around organ transplantation, to look specifically at how the event of (micro)chimerism contests the discourse of the self's immunity to the other. In the face of a socio-cultural imaginary that insists on the singularity of the human, the authorised discourse remains, nevertheless, largely unchanged, stressing the importance of securing immunity not only in biomedicine - where the search is for a functional explanation of (micro)chimerism that will preserve the status quo - but also in biopolitics. I want to speculate on the problematic in a way that turns to Esposito's thinking of *immunitas* and to the Deleuzian concept of assemblage as a better model for organic life, including human life.

14:00 – 14:15   Closing Remarks

14:15 – 15:15   <u>Workshop 2 (B112)</u>
Stefan Herbrechter – "Posthumanist Literature?"

<u>Description</u>: How does one read as a posthumanist? This involves a number of difficulties: if posthumanism is to develop its own aesthetics it needs to distinguish itself from previous styles and reappropriate its own traditions and counter-traditions. It also needs to reflect on past, contemporary and future realities as well as on current cultural, social, technological etc. change. However, if posthumanism is also - as a philosophical/theoretical discourse - an attempt to take the notion of postanthropocentrism seriously, then reading (and writing) as such, as fundamentally humanist activities, become problematic. How can one read (or write) outside the human? Following on from our article 'What is a posthumanist reading?' (provided) we will discuss the shift towards postanthropocentrism in recent literature, media and theory.

<u>Reading for discussion</u>: "What is a Posthumanist Reading?" (Herbrechter and Callus)

15:15 – 15:30   Coffee break

15:30 – 16:30   <u>Workshop 3 (B112)</u>
Cary Wolfe – "(Auto)Immunity and Posthumanist Social Theory"

<u>Description</u>: We will begin by taking as axiomatic Roberto Esposito's contention that the immunity paradigm is at the center of biopolitics—a fact that, he asserts, Michel Foucault's work on biopolitics never fully developed. When we delve more deeply into the theoretical structure of the immunity mechanism, however (chiefly by returning to its rearticulation in terms of second order systems theory), what we find is that the "political" under this description has a paradoxical character. Insofar as we have a "strong" or "proper" concept of the political (that is to say, a concept of the political that is "properly" autopoietic and self-referential), we will, paradoxically,

end up with a concept of the political that is also weak—not just in logical terms, but also in terms of its ability to "steer" or overdetermine the autopoiesis of other social systems. What is needed, then, is a more robust theory of social complexity and how the political is related to it than what has heretofore been available in biopolitical thought. We will conclude by exploring how this new understanding of where the immunitary paradigm leads us is related to Deleuze's late ruminations on "control society" and Kenneth Burke's notion of "comic frames of acceptance" in his writings on democracy in the 1940s.

Reading for discussion: "(Auto)immunity and Posthumanist Social Theory" (Wolfe)

16:30 – 17:30   Workshop 4 (B112)
Margrit Shildrick – "Posthumanist Knowledge Production at the site of encounter"

Description: The workshop will reflect on the encounter with otherness as the basis of postmodernist ethics. Taking off from a close critique of Melvina Young's chapter 'Exploring the WPA Narratives' in S. James and A. Busia *Theorizing Black Feminisms* (1994 Routledge, pp: 55-75), we will explore response and responsibility, and the production of 'knowledge' in the face of the unknown. If the task is so uncertain in the context of human to human encounters, what kinds of knowledge production might be possible in the realm of the posthuman? The workshop relies on all participants having read the set text in advance and having asked themselves what grounds and limits any future ethics.

Reading for discussion: "Exploring the WPA Narratives: Finding the Voices of Black women and men" (Young)